

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 IGA-02 SCA-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 FDRE-00 HEW-04 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01
DHA-02 USIA-06 EB-08 CCO-00 SCS-03 ORM-02 OMB-01 /121 W
-----101640Z 107632 /46

P 101446Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3284

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1039

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, LE

SUBJECT: DISASTER RELIEF: LEBANESE REQUEST FOR TENTS

1. SUMMARY: LEBANESE MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, DR. ASSAD RIZK, WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF HIGH COMMISSION FOR RELIEF, HAS ASKED WHETHER USG CAN HELP SUPPLY 3,000 - 4,000 TENTS FOR LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN REFUGEES. THEY HAVE IN MIND PYRAMIDAL MODEL ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE 6 OR 8 PERSONS. I HAVE AGREED TRANSMIT REQUEST BUT MADE NO COMMITMENT. DETAILS GIVEN BELOW. END SUMMARY.

2. LEBANESE - DURING COURTESY CALL ON MARCH 8, MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS RIZK SAID THERE ARE SOME 40,000 LEBANESE REFUGEES FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON NOW DISPERSED IN COASTAL AREAS FROM TYRE TO BEIRUT. THEY ARE PERSONS FLEEING THE FIGHTING
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IN THE SOUTH. AT PRESENT THEY ARE SQUATTING IN APARTMENTS, CAMPING OUT WITH FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, AND LIVING IN MISCELLANEOUS SHELTERS HERE AND THERE. GOL WANTS TO SET UP TWO TENT CAMPS, ONE NORTH AND ONE SOUTH OF SIDON, TO RECEIVE THEM. IT HAS SELECTED SITES AND IS STARTING WORK ON SANITARY FACILITIES, WATER AND ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS.

IT HAS NOT FOUND TENTS IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITY, HOWEVER. IT HAS FOUND 50 HERE AND 40 THERE, BUT NO LARGE SUPPLY ANYWHERE.

3. GOL INFORMED BY LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES THAT ONLY LARGE STOCK OF TENTS AVAILABLE IS IN HANDS U.S. ARMY IN ITALY. GOL HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SYG BUFFUM AT UN ON SUBJECT AND LATTER IS TO DISCUSS WITH USG. RIZK HOPES WE CAN SUPPORT AMB BUFFUM'S EFFORTS.

4. RIZK THEN NOTED THAT GOL DOES NOT KNOW HOW MANY LEBANESE REFUGEES WILL ACTUALLY AGREE TO MOVE INTO TENTS (WE SUSPECT NUMBER WILLING VACATE BEIRUT APARTMENT FOR TENT IS MINIMAL, BUT THERE ARE OTHERS CAMPED OUT IN ORCHARDS AROUND SIDON WHO UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD WELCOME EVEN A TENT). WHAT GOL WOULD LIKE TO HAVE IS A STOCK OF 600 TO 1000 TENTS IT COULD USE TO FILL DEMAND WHICH DEVELOPS.

5. PALESTINIANS - RIZK SAID GOL HAD "DEFINITE" AGREEMENT WITH PLO TO MOVE ESTIMATED 14,500 PALESTINIANS NOW SQUATTING IN DAMOUR (COASTAL TOWN SOUTH OF BEIRUT) TO CAMP SITE AT GHAZIYEH, BETWEEN ZAHRANI AND TYRE. PLO HAS UNDERTAKEN TO MOVE REFUGEES AND PROVIDE FOR THOSE WHO NOT REGISTERED AS SUCH WITH UNRWA, IF GOL WILL PROVIDE CAMP. GOL NEEDS ABOUT 3000 TENTS FOR THIS PURPOSE. IT HOPES
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TO START MOVE BY APRIL 1. RIZK SAID MOVING PALESTINIANS OUT OF DAMOUR WAS CRITICAL NECESSITY, BECAUSE RETURN OF DAMOUR INHABITANTS TO THEIR HOMES WAS KEY ELEMENT IN GOL'S RECONSTRUCTION POLICY.

6. GOL HAD APPROACHED UNRWA FOR HELP. LATTER AGENCY HAD SAID IT HAD NO MONEY.

7. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT PLO WOULD AGREE TO SUCH A MOVE AND TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEEDING REFUGEES. RIZK SAID GOL HAD BEEN SURPRISED TOO, BUT THEY HAD ASSURANCES FROM "HIGHEST LEVEL" OF PLO THAT ORGANIZATION ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOVING PALESTINIANS.

8. HAVE DISCUSSED ABOVE WITH UNRWA COUNTRY DIRECTOR PREVOT AND UN REP SAUNDERS. PREVOT SAYS UNRWA ESTIMATES NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN DAMOUR AT 13,000. LARGE MAJORITY OF THEM IN FACT REGISTERED

WITH UNRWA AND RECEIVING RATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL
AND MEDICAL SERVICES. UNRWA WOULD BE PREPARED
PROVIDE SAME SERVICES TO THEM IN NEW LOCATION.
GOL HAD ORIGINALLY PROPOSED SITE VERY CLOSE TO
ISRAELI BORDER, WHICH PALESTINIANS HAD REFUSED
BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TOO REMOTE FROM EMPLOYMENT.
HE BELIEVED SITE BETWEEN TYRE AND SIDON WOULD BE
ACCEPTABLE TO PALESTINIANS, HOWEVER (HE HAD NOT
HEARD THAT GOL HAD SETTLED ON GHAZIYEH). HE
UNDERSTOOD THAT PLO, WHICH MOTIVATED BY DESIRE
TO DEMONSTRATE ITS HELPFULNESS, PROPOSING TO HAVE
THREE-STORY HOUSING PUT UP IN CAMP TO ACCOMMODATE
MORE REFUGEES IN SMALLER SPACE. HE DID NOT KNOW
HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD ACTUALLY AGREE TO MOVE INTO
TENTS. SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO GOL,
HOWEVER, BECAUSE RETURN OF PEOPLE TO THEIR
ORIGINAL HOMES WAS HIGH PRIORITY AS STEP TOWARDS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1039

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

9. I POINTED OUT THAT OPERATION AS HE DESCRIBED IT WOULD AMOUNT TO OUR GIVING TENTS TO PLO, WHICH WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE AT THIS JUNCTURE. HE SUGGESTED THAT WE GIVE TENTS ON UNDERSTANDING UNRWA WOULD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ERECTION.

10. SAUNDERS, WHO HAS GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COORDINATING UN RELIEF EFFORTS IN LEBANON, NOTED THAT PALESTINIANS WERE, OF COURSE, NOT IN HIS BAILIWICK. HE DID NOT KNOW HOW MANY REFUGEES FROM THE SOUTH WOULD BE PREPARED MOVE INTO TENTS, BUT SUGGESTED THAT GOL MAY NOT HAVE THOUGHT OPERATION THROUGH AS THOROUGHLY AS IT MIGHT.

11. COMMENT: AS NOTED ABOVE WHILE UNDOUBTEDLY THERE ARE MANY REFUGEES FROM SOUTH WHO WOULD WELCOME TENT AT THIS POINT, WE ARE SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS THAT MANY LEBANESE REFUGEES OF THOSE WHO NOW SQUATTING IN

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APARTMENTS IN BEIRUT WILL MOVE INTO TENTS. SUSPECT THERE WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERABLE RELUCTANCE ON PART OF PALESTINIANS OCCUPYING HOUSES IN DAMOUR TO MOVE OUT TO TENTS. BOTH ARE CONSUMMATIONS DEVOUTLY TO BE WISHED FOR IN TERMS LEBANESE INTERNAL SITUATION, HOWEVER. OF THE TWO, BELIEVE MOVE OF PALESTINIANS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TENTS FOR LEBANESE REFUGEES. THERE IS NEED TO FIND PERMANENT SITE FOR PALESTINIANS, WHEREAS REFUGEES FROM SOUTH ARE, WE HOPE, A PASSING PROBLEM WHICH WILL RESOLVE ITSELF IN NEXT FEW MONTHS.

12. RECOMMENDATION: THAT WE AGREE TO SUPPLY GOL WITH QUANTITY OF TENTS COMMENSURATE WITH AVAILABILITIES, ON UNDERSTANDING IT AND UNRWA WILL ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ERECTION AND SUPERVISION OF CAMP SITE.

13. FOR JERUSALEM: PLEASE SHOW ABOVE TO TOM MCELHINEY.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3155090
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISASTER RELIEF: LEBANESE REQUEST FOR TENTS
TAGS: EAID, SWEL, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e1b9d1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009